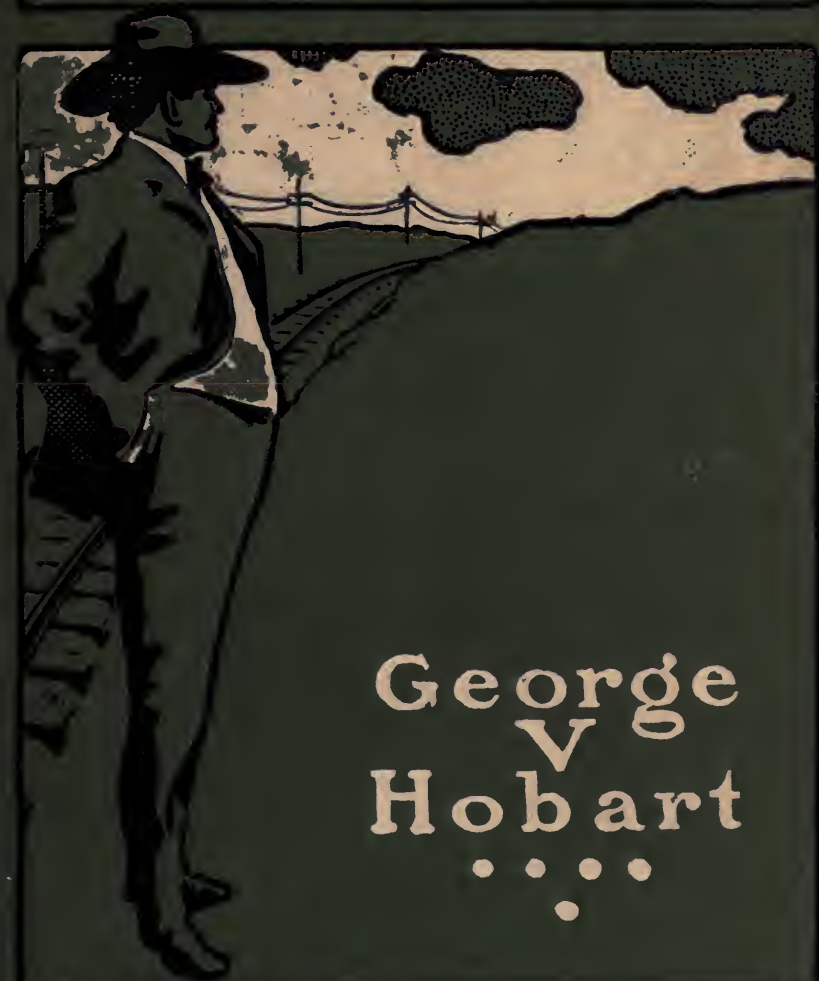


JIM HICKEY



George
V
Hobart
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JIM HICKEY



Jim and Danny —Page 9

Frontispiece

JIM HICKEY

A Story of the One-Night Stands

By GEORGE V. HOBART

AUTHOR OF

"JOHN HENRY," "IT'S UP TO YOU," ETC.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY McKEE BARCLAY

G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY

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ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL

Jim Hickey

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TO MY WIFE

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JIM HICKEY

CHAPTER FIRST

THE TIRED TROUPERS



HE woods for ours! Isn't this a bird of a place for a show to get stranded?" Jim Hickey asked, disgustedly, as he sat down on a baggage truck.

Danny Dean, the low comedian of the late lamented "Sheridan Stock and Repertoire Co.," made no answer. With blinking eyes he watched the Western express until it disappeared around the last curve in the distance.

Then he turned to his friend, the

light comedian, and said, quite irrelevantly:

“ Hellsdelight! ”

Under stress of great mental excitement Danny’s vocabulary, at least that part of it which threw the lurid lights, consisted of only two words, but Danny could make them fit any emergency.

“ It wouldn’t have been so bad if the show had gone to pieces in some burg where the people have insomnia in the daytime,” Jim growled. “ But here, Danny, the men go to work in their pajamas, and the town hasn’t any street cars because the conductor’s bell sounds too much like an alarm clock and it might wake the Mayor.”

Jim arose, pushed the dark hair back from his forehead and paraded his six feet of youthful manhood in front of the roly-polly Danny, who sat down with a loud sigh on the truck.

The Tired Troupers

“ I tell you, Danny,” Jim went on, “ I’m too delicate for this one-night stand gag. I’m going to New York and build a theatre.”

“ What with? ” sneered Danny.

“ With a reporter I know on one of the papers,” Jim chuckled. “ Say, what was the name of that town we played night before last? ”

“ Murphy’s Landing, wasn’t it? ” Danny answered.

“ I guess that’s right, because Murphy landed on me good and hard,” Jim said. “ Remember those nice white door knobs we ate for breakfast next morning? The waitress said they were hot biscuits, but I had to eat mine with a nut cracker. I’ve got it in my pantry yet, and every time I walk around the knob turns and I can hear a door open somewhere.”

Jim Hickey

Danny's double chin showed signs of agitation.

“ Stranded, here in this jay town! ” Jim stood and looked over the landscape. “ Say, Danny! what we need is a guardian. And while we're at it let's pick out one with money so we can wire him for a little price to help us out on occasions like this. The next manager that wins me away from the stock yards will have to wear a gold-plated overcoat, and stand in the wings every night where he can throw ten dollar bills at me when I make my exit. No more slob impressarios for mine, with nothing in their inside pockets but a date book and a hearty appetite.”

“ Same here, Jim! ” Danny nodded. “ The next manager that picks me out will have to drag me down to his bank and let me kick his coupons off the shelf before I'll sign,” Danny insisted.

The Tired Troupers

“ Bumped, good and hard, here in the tall grass,” Jim complained again, “ and not a cookie in the lunch basket. Say! it has me winging all right, and that’s no idle hoot! This is the third troupe that blew out its mainspring for us this season and I’m beginning to believe we ought to get vaccinated. How am I going to do Hamlet in New York this winter I’d like to know? Eight weeks since we left Chicago, three shows to the bad and we aren’t out of the state of Illinois yet. Say, Danny, at this rate it’ll take about 629 shows to get us to Jersey City, are you hip? ”

Danny laughed, “ It’s the old story, Jim, my boy, we’re a sad bunch of ploughboys on this old farm of a world when we haven’t a little mazume in the vest pocket. I’ve got a new bit of a recitation spiel I cooked up last night when I couldn’t sleep. It’s called

Jim Hickey

“ Knock and the World Knocks With You,” and I’ll put you jerry to it right now before it gets cold! ”

“ Well, I’m from Texas, so you’ll have to steer me,” said Jim.

“ Pipe the everlasting truth contained herein,” said Danny, whereupon he proceeded as follows:

Knock, and the world knocks with you,
Boost and you boost alone!
When you roast good and loud
You will find that the crowd
Has a hammer as big as your own!

Buy, and the gang is with you;
Renig, and the game’s all off,
For the lad with the thirst
Will see you first
If you don’t proceed to cough!

Be rich and the push will praise you,
Be poor and they’ll pass the ice,
You’re a warm young guy
When you start to buy—
You’re a slob when you lose the price!

The Tired Troupers

Be flush and your friends are many,
Go broke and they'll say Ta, ta!
While your bank account burns
You will get returns,
When it's out you will get the Ha!

Be gay and the mob will cheer you,
They'll shout while your wealth endures;
Show a tearful lamp
And you'll see them tramp—
And it's back to the woods for yours!

There's always a bunch to boost you
While at your money they glance;
But you'll find them all gone
On that cold gray dawn
When the fringe arrives on your pants!

“ You've got the game of life sized
to a show-down,” was Jim's comment.
“ Say, Danny, excuse me for rushing
away so soon from that bundle of
Shakespeare you just pulled, but what
was the matter with our ex-manager?
The house we had last night looked like

Jim Hickey

real money to me. Did you flash your lamps over it? ”

“ Hellsdelight! ” spluttered the low comedian; “ sure I did. Must have been a hundred and seventy-five dollars, not counting the pulp! ”

“ Ditto,” said Jim. “ That’s how I sized it up, and I allowed for the paper, same as you, Danny. And, say! when Sam Bishop came back after the third act last night and said we’d have to put the shutters up I nearly took the count. Stranded, here in this grass burg—it’s awful, Danny! ”

“ Sam Bishop is a shine Manager,” growled the low comedian. “ What he don’t know about running a rep. show would keep any man in thoughts for a year. He ought to be the leading man in a lemonade wagon. How’d a real woman like his wife ever come to marry a false-alarm like Sam? ”

The Tired Troupers

“ You can put me under the microscope! ” answered Jim, sitting on the truck. “ I did hear once that he won her away from a good home, but she isn’t out with an extra about her troubles. She’s a queen, all right, and, say, Danny! that kid of hers! ”

Danny’s face grew radiant with a grin while dimples deep with delight suddenly appeared in his broad and ample cheeks.

“ Say, Jim! Amy Bishop’s kid is an awful hit with me,” Danny chuckled.

“ Seems like that li’l tacker understands every word I say to him. That’s one big reason why I’m sore because the troupe is busted.” The grin died away, the dimples vanished, and gray thoughts of the future gave their shadows to Danny’s eyes.

Jim, too, was silent, and thus they sat while the October sunlight danced

Jim Hickey

about them and tried to be kind to the grim and dirty little railroad station.

But presently even the sunlight tired of its philanthropic task and it gladly withdrew when sombre clouds hurried up the sky from the East. Then the dismal depot at Pikehaven, Illinois, came into its own again.

Jim shivered and buttoned his coat. "Where's the rest of the push?" he asked.

"All of them had enough to make Chicago. They left early on the East bound accommodation—all except you and me and Sam Bishop and Amy and Li'l Bill!" Danny was glad to be able to add this last bit of intelligence, the return of the dimples proved it.

"I'm afraid you've mentioned at least three who won't answer roll call," Jim said; "Sam and his wife went West on the express!"

The Tired Troupers

“ Hellsdelight! ” Danny fairly shrieked, as he jumped up. “ Sam Bishop and his wife and the kid went West? ”

“ Just as I got down here the train was pulling out,” Jim explained. “ I caught a glimpse of Sam Bishop climbing on board. Amy was ahead of him. That’s all the news the ticker has at present—why, Danny, what’s the matter? ”

Danny was staring wild-eyed at Jim, his face purpling with suppressed rage.

“ The lobster! Oh, oh! what an onion that slob is! ” Danny managed to yell.

“ If you’re going to swear turn your face the other way, Danny. What did Sam do? ”

“ What did he do? He did *me*, that’s what he done. He touched *me* for my last ten spot! ” Poor Danny was on the verge of a collapse.

Jim Hickey

“Touched you for your last ten,” echoed Jim. “Well, wouldn’t that give you exercise!”

“When I heard last night that the troupe had exploded I thought it was about time for me to begin to save some money, so I fixed it with one of the stage hands to let me sleep in the dressing-room,” Danny started to explain.

“That accounts for it, then,” said Jim. “I sat up all night waiting for you in the hotel office. You didn’t get any the best of me on that money-saving idea, because I slept in the chair when the night clerk wasn’t looking. Of course I had to get up every half hour and look over the register to prove I wasn’t taking a shingle off the man’s roof by stealing a lot of sleep, but I made good, all right!”

Danny was busy with his thoughts

The Tired Troupers

till Jim stopped. "Early this morning I was up, and the first crack out of the box I ran into Sam Bishop. 'I think I can make the riffle to get a rate to Chicago,' he says. 'I had the station agent and his entire tribe in here last night. Drop in your contribution, Danny, and I'll get your ticket.'

"I handed him my last ten spot—all I had on earth except eighty cents—and he says, 'All right, Danny, I'll give you the change at the hotel,' and with that he ducked for the depot. Say, Jim, I'll certainly have to spoil that man's map! "

"It's coming to him, all right, Danny," Jim agreed.

"Maybe," Danny added in a softer voice, while the dimples came back for a moment. "Maybe he'll spend some of it for the kid. If he does, perhaps I won't hate him so much."

Jim Hickey

“ I’m sure he will, Danny. In the meantime, we’ll form a joint stock company. You say there’s eighty cents in the kick? Good! Hand over. It goes with my thirteen dollars and eighty cents. Fine! We’ve got capital between us to the extent of fourteen dollars and sixty cents. That’ll buy our breakfast, our tickets to Chicago and enough left over for a couple of shaves when we get there. Me for the eats; come on, Danny! ”

Danny stood looking wistfully up the Western tracks. “ I wish I could have seen that kid again before he quit me,” he murmured.

“ Come on, Danny! Don’t you hear those breakfast bells? ” Jim yelled.

Danny sighed and dug two pudgy fists into his eyes.

Then he turned and followed Jim.

CHAPTER SECOND

THE ONE WHO WAITED



STRANGE to say, the name of Pikehaven's centre of gastronomical delights was not the Waldorf, or the Astoria, or the Delmonico.

A weather-beaten sign swung over the not too-imposing entrance, and complained unceasingly because it did picket duty in front of so plebeian a place as

THE COMMERCIAL HOUSE

PETER STUMP, PROPR.

Jim Hickey

But Peter Stump, after many fat years of waddling to the post-office and back again to the fat little arm-chair where he sipped fat whiskey and smoked a fat old pipe, had been gathered to his fathers, and Mrs. Stump reigned in his stead.

A good, motherly old lady was Mrs. Stump, bespectacled and benign of expression, but with a tongue which Nature had obviously intended for an auctioneer.

Marmaduke, the only hope, the pride, the joy of doting Mrs. Stump, rejoiced in the glory of nineteen pale summers, while he smoked cigarettes that smelled like an anaesthetic, and otherwise posed as the day clerk in the hotel.

The night clerk, by name Harry Slite, was short, stout and intense. His head was bald, inside and out. His fondness for using big words was

The One Who Waited

the one absorbing passion of his life.

Jim Hickey walked airily into the dingy office of The Commercial House this brown October morning, and Danny Deane's stout personality followed closely after.

"Say, Jim, I've got an appetite on me that won't do a thing to a laboring man's breakfast," the low comedian whispered in his loudest up-stage voice.

Jim's answer will never be known, for at that moment both men stopped short in their tracks, gazing in dumb amazement at the woman who, leading a little boy, came forward and greeted them.

"Good morning, Jim, and Danny," she said sweetly, while the baby's hands went out to the low comedian; "I was afraid you had gone without saying good-by. Really, I was begin-

Jim Hickey

ning to feel dreadfully hurt. The baby would never have forgiven you, Danny, if you hadn't told him good-by. Have you seen anything of Sam? I've been sitting here an hour waiting for him. He went down to the depot to see some of the company off on the Western express. Why don't you speak to the baby, Danny? I'm dreadfully hungry, but I'll have to wait breakfast for Sam, because he took my pocket-book with him to get our tickets. He said we'd leave for Chicago about noon. Why, Jim, what in the world is the matter with you? "

" Nothing, Amy; nothing at all," Jim answered. " I just happened to remember something. Excuse me, just a moment."

Jim drew his astonished friend aside and whispered hoarsely, " Danny, go outside and let loose about ten para-



"Have you seen anything of Sam?" asked Amy.—Page 28

The One Who Waited

graphs of the warmest talk in your collection; swear till you're black in the forehead and relieve my feelings! Cut loose, Danny, and turn your face in the direction of the West—that's the way the train went. Say anything you think of and charge it to me."

With tightly compressed lips Danny hurried out, and that he attended strictly to the business in hand was evident from the astonishment depicted on the faces of the few pedestrians who passed The Commercial House during the next few minutes.

"Sit down, Amy," said Jim, smiling as of old. "I had to send Danny to attend to a bit of business for me. Did you say Sam took the gate receipts with him?"

Amy laughed. "Yes, all I had, and that wasn't very much. But I do wish he'd hurry back! I'm dreadfully hun-

Jim Hickey

gry, and so is the baby. Are you going on to Chicago with us? ”

“ Danny and I haven’t booked our route yet,” Jim answered. “ We thought possibly we might open a stock company here in Pikehaven and put on some of Bill Shakespeare’s stuff. It looks like a good place for tragedy.”

Danny came in, with a look of intense relief on his red and perspiring face.

Jim took him aside again. “ Get busy with the vacant stare behind the counter—the day clerk. Talk fast to him a minute, Danny, I want to do a little cooking.”

Danny grinned amiably and led Marmaduke into a discussion of the drama and its relation to Pikehaven, until presently Jim said, “ I beg pardon, what are your rates here? ”

Marmaduke paused in the act of

The One Who Waited

lighting a cigarette and said with a lisp, "Two dollarth a day, American plan."

"I see that Mr. Bishop has registered his wife's name here on the log-book," Jim went on. "That's the lady in the chair over there."

"Ith that tho!" Marmaduke said, dropping the cigarette in his excitement. "Thirtenly ith peculiar." He examined the register. "Theems tho funny I never noticed that name in there before—te, he, he! I wonder when Mr. Bithop did that—thirtenly ith peculiar."

"Two dollars a day with meals?" Jim asked.

"Yeth," answered Marmaduke, his shy little brain still coquetting with the mystery of the name on the register.

"Well, I happened to meet Mr.

Jim Hickey

Bishop at the depot a while ago," Jim went on, "and he asked me if I wouldn't give you this money and tell you to give Mrs. Bishop the very best room you can for a week."

"Fourteen dollarth," Marmaduke whispered, counting the money, with wonder in his pale eyes.

To the chief clerk of the chief hotel in Pikehaven fourteen dollars all at once was a big sum of money.

Danny looked at Jim and chuckled, while the grin broadened and the dimples danced again.

"That'll be all right, won't it?" Jim inquired. "He asked me to be sure and see the chief clerk, who, he said, was a wise gazabe that knew the hotel business backwards."

Marmaduke's paper-weight chest began to swell out under the influence of Jim's flattery.

"Thirtenly, thirtenly!" Marmaduke

The One Who Waited

duke answered. " I'll attend to it perthonally, thure, thure! "

Jim went back to Amy and the baby. " Your husband has you registered for breakfast, and the clerk tells me it's all paid for," he said.

" Oh, really! " she laughed. " How stupid of me to sit here and never think of looking at the register! Of course Sam would think of that. I deserve to be hungry for not having my wits about me; don't I, baby? You poor little boy, father thought of you, but mother didn't."

Danny turned away with a muttered " Hellsdelight! "

" Jim, you and Danny will come in to breakfast with us, won't you? " Amy insisted. " Sam will be back any moment, and he won't scold me for waiting so long if you're there," she added.

" Not any more shredded oats for

Jim Hickey

ours," Jim said. "Why, Danny and I had breakfast hours ago; didn't we, Danny? We've got a rehearsal."

"A rehearsal!" Amy repeated in astonishment.

"Yes," Jim laughed. "Frohman has probably heard by this time that the troupe blew out a fuse, and he may wire for Danny and me any minute. Good actors like us are scarce in New York."

Amy smiled and took the baby into the little dining-room, while Jim and Danny walked quickly out into Pikehaven's busiest thoroughfare, where grew the grass of ages.

"Jim, Jim, gi'me your hand!" Danny insisted. "You're aces up, that's what you are!"

"Oh, cut it out, Danny," Jim replied. "Part of it was your money, wasn't it?"

The One Who Waited

“ My money! ” Danny yelled. “ My money! Hellsdelight! I only had eighty cents to go in with. My money! You’re talking through your teeth.”

“ Well, what difference who’s it was?” retorted Jim. “ You’d do the same thing, wouldn’t you? Wouldn’t we be a nice pair of turtles to stand around with coin in our jeans and see a nice girl like Amy getting the ice? ”

“ And Li’l Bill, too,” Danny suggested.

“ Yes, and the kid, too,” Jim agreed. “ We only did what little we could for a real woman who was given the double cross by a false-alarm husband, and I’m not out looking for any medals, Danny.”

“ No, but you’re the goods, all right,” Danny maintained; “ and I mean it, Jim, ’cause I’m hungry as hell —and glad of it! ”

CHAPTER THIRD

THE DELAYED TELEGRAM



IT'S the pike for ours! " Jim said when he and the low comedian came out of the sordid little eating-room at the depot, where nearly all of their remaining sixty cents had been exchanged for two imitation breakfasts.

" Not on your lithograph! " Danny objected. " Say, Jim, we can't pull our freights away from here and leave the little woman and the kid alone in that Rube hash foundry, now can we? "

Jim was silent.

" What'll become of them when the week's up? " Danny persisted.

The Delayed Telegram

“ What’ll become of us before the week gets started? ” Jim parried.

“ Well, maybe we can get some work,” Danny suggested. “ We’ve got to pull off some kind of a fight to send Amy and Li’l Bill back to her people in Chicago, if it’s only to spite Sam Bishop, the hand-painted shrimp!”

“ Soak him one for me,” said Jim.

“ Was there really a woman with him getting on the express? ” Danny asked.

“ Sure there was,” Jim replied. “ Didn’t I pipe him helping her up the steps—the plate of cheese! ”

“ Who was it? Not a queen of Rube society eager to get out in the mad, mad world? ” Danny ventured.

“ Close the window, you’re catching cold! ” admonished Jim. “ It must have been that saddlerock soubrette who joined the troupe the week stand

Jim Hickey

in Cincinnati. Imogene Montmorency, she of the painted hair and the sad lamps in the burnt-matches frames."

"Imogene!" Danny was scornful. "Imogene, the human wheat-cake!—well, wouldn't that cancel your dates?"

"Yes, and if she ever has to give her right name there'll be work for a Swede interpreter," Jim went on. "I caught her giving Bishop the glad gaze several times, but I put on my blinders and played dead. If I had known it was going to be a case of flee as a bird, you can gamble on it, Danny, I certainly would have said unkind things to the near-actress lady with the oakum topknot and the complexion like an apple fritter."

"Hellsdelight!" roared Danny, "and if I had suspected it I sure would have handed Sam Bishop a cou-

The Delayed Telegram

ple of Jefferies and two or three Fitzsimmons, if I'd been pinched the next minute. It certainly would cool my fevered brow to bust that man's G string."

Danny was about to inaugurate a verbal pyrotechnical display when Jim caught him by the arm. "We're a couple of splashes," he said fiercely. "We should have sent Amy a telegram."

"A telegram!" Danny repeated in surprise.

"Yes," said Jim. "A telegram from that fricassee husband of hers. Doesn't she expect him back to the hotel every minute? Well, the longer she waits the fiercer the weeps when she let's go, that's all."

Danny bobbed his double chin around vigorously.

"Amy is going to play that goat to

Jim Hickey

show, and we'll have to scratch him quick." Jim looked around hopelessly.

"Say, if I could get a receiving blank and an envelope in there," he said suddenly, "she wouldn't know my writing from Pierpont Morgan's. Danny, see if you can give the telegraph operator the busy chin-chin while I do some more cooking."

They hurried into the dismal little waiting-room, where the two actors soon made friends with Jabe Meade, station agent, telegraph operator and baggage master, all in one hilarious and laughter-laden personality.

Jabe could laugh so loud and so long that strangers believed him to be a mechanical toy filled with complicated machinery, and they backed away from him in awe. It really seemed as though the inhabitants had turned their re-



"You be the fat cuss that cut up at the
Op'ry House!" roared Jabe Meade.—Page 41

The Delayed Telegram

spective laugh-producers over to Jabe and he was now the official mirth-maker to all Pikehaven.

It didn't take Danny very long to find out Jabe's characteristics, and a few of the low comedian's best stories did the rest.

"You be the fat cuss that cut up with that thar troupe at the Op'ry House last night, been't ye?" Jabe asked.

"No, I'm the skeleton man with a circus," Danny answered, and Jabe roared with delight.

"You don't look as how you took much exercise," snickered Jabe.

"But I do take exercise—oh, me for that exercise thing, good and strong!" protested Danny.

"What kind of exercise do you take?" Jabe inquired.

"Well," Danny answered, "every

Jim Hickey

morning I swing the clubs for fifteen minutes, then the dumb-bells for ten minutes, then I run about three miles—and then I get up and eat my breakfast.”

Jabe guffawed loudly over this bit of facetiousness.

“I was at the Op’ry House last night,” Jabe informed them, “and I ’most laughed myself sick to the stomach at this yer fat cuss takin’ off that Dutch policeman—ha, ha, ha, ha!” Jabe looked at Jim Hickey. “You was putty good, too,” he admitted, “tak-in’ off that newspaper reporter and rescuin’ the girl from the burnin’ structyure, but you didn’t do no funny fall and bust your gallusses like this yer fat cuss—ha, ha, ha, ha!”

“Get him to unhook the laugh; he’s a good steady listener,” whispered Jim, and Danny started in.

The Delayed Telegram

“Fine town, this Pikehaven,” Danny began. “All the modern improvements, eh? Cows wear nickle-plated bells, streets paved with grass and the river has running water.”

“Ha, ha, ha, ha!” Jabe roared.

“Reminds me of a place we struck out in Missouri last winter,” Danny went on. “Same style of public architecture, especially the town pump. But the hotel there was the hit with us. It was called the ‘Declaration of Independence,’ because the proprietor had married an English woman and wanted to be revenged. At supper time I ordered a steak, and they brought me a leather hinge covered with gravy, so I got up to add an amendment to the Declaration of Independence. The head waiter was an ex-pugilist, so he put the boots to me and covered my amendment with

bruises. Then he made me eat the leather hinge, and for two weeks I used to slam every time the wind blew."

Jabe's laugh shook the building.

"The proprietor of that hotel was so patriotic," Danny continued, "that he wouldn't number the rooms like any ordinary hotel. Every room was named in honor of a President of the United States. That evening there happened to be a rush while I was standing near the desk, and I heard the clerk say, 'Front, show these gentlemen up to John Quincy Adams, and tell the porter to take that trunk out of the alcove in Thomas Jefferson. Front, go and put down that window in Rutherford B. Hayes, and, here, take this whiskey up to Abraham Lincoln. Front, what's all that racket in James Buchanan? Here, take these cigars to U. S. Grant, and turn off the gas in

The Delayed Telegram

Grover Cleveland.' But I nearly fainted when he said, 'Front, run a sofa into James A. Garfield, and take these two ladies up to George Washington.' "

"Mortal Cæsar! Ha, ha, ha, ha!" roared Jabe. "Dag gone, if that ain't funny, you fat cuss!"

While Danny told the stories Jim arranged the telegram, and so interested was Jabe that he didn't notice what kind of writing material the light comedian used.

The station agent kindly obliged Jim with an envelope, and when the latter offered the last dime in his collection for a boy to deliver the message to Mrs. Bishop at the hotel, Jabe roared again and said, "If this yer fat cuss'll drop in and tell me some more of them dag gone good stories I'll keep my oldest boy, Panegyric, runnin' messages

Jim Hickey

for you all day for nothin' at all—ha, ha, ha, ha! ”

“ Panegyric? ” questioned Jim.

“ That's my oldest,” Jabe said proudly. “ When Captain Jorkins, the conductor on No. 3, fust saw that boy he said he was ‘ a Meade of praise,’ and the school teacher told me a Meade of praise is a Panegyric, so nothing would do Maw but we must christen him Panegyric—ha, ha, ha, ha! ”

Jim and Danny both joined in the laugh, and presently they went outside.

A half hour later they decided Panegyric had delivered the telegram, so they went to the hotel to study its effect at closer range.

In the office of The Commercial House they found Mrs. Stump, the proprietress, knitting by the office stove and giving the full benefit of her moth-

The Delayed Telegram

erly advice to Marmaduke, who slept placidly behind the counter.

“ My patience! ” she exclaimed when the two friends entered. “ There you are now. The lady in No. 4 has been a cryin’ her eyes out, but I’ve kept tellin’ her that weepin’ and wailin’ and gnashin’ of teeth won’t do no good, ’specially when a person has her health and such a fine baby. As Ira D. Sankey has it in the hymn book,

‘ How red the eyes, how red the nose
When woman weeps away her woes! ’ ”

Mrs. Stump’s ability to clothe every circumstance in the glory of her home-made poetry was astonishing, but just why she accredited all her quaint couplets to the authorship of Ira D. Sankey nobody could ever find out.

“ I mentioned most ev’ry proverb I know referrin’ to tears,” Mrs. Stump

Jim Hickey

continued, " but, my patience! it didn't seem to ca'm her none, so I put the baby to sleep and just let her cry."

" What's the matter? " Jim asked, glancing at Danny in alarm.

" Matter! " the old lady repeated scornfully. " Same matter as has afflicted us women sence Eve woke up in the Garden of Eden and found a man staring at her. Husband, that's what's the matter."

Jim found it hard to control the impulse to run somewhere, anywhere, away from the tears of that poor girl, who, he was sure, in spite of all their efforts, had learned the bitter truth.

Danny was fearful, too, for he kept muttering " Hellsdelight! " over and over.

" Ira D. Sankey has it right in the hymn book," Mrs. Stump went on; " which says,

The Delayed Telegram

‘Satan finds some mischief still
For husbands’ hands and always will!’

“Husbands is the well where women draw their tears—I had one, and I ought to know. Most obstinatest man that ever drew the breath of life. He’s with the saints now, poor soul. Ain’t no doubt about that, because even if the saints didn’t want him he was that set in his way he’d just stay there to spite them. My patience, as Ira D. Sankey has it,

‘Women that is born to wed
Might just as well be dead instead!’”

“Could we see Mrs. Bishop for a moment?” Jim asked, in an effort to stem the tide of talk.

“My patience! yes; she’s in the parlor,” Mrs. Stump answered, getting up as quickly as the rheumatism would permit. “I’ll show you.”

Jim Hickey

“ Oh, Jim, Danny! ” Amy exclaimed as the trio entered the little parlor, “ haven’t you seen Sam anywhere? I simply cannot understand it, and I’m so nervous with waiting! ”

“ Thank God! she doesn’t suspect,” said Jim under his breath. Then aloud, and cheerfully, “ No, Amy, we’ve been over to the theatre all the morning. Sam’s all right, and you’re all right and everything’s all right; isn’t it, Danny? ”

“ Well, I should crush an egg! ” chuckled Danny; and then aside, “ where the devil is that telegram? ”

At that moment the lagging Pane-gyric entered the room, stared around stupidly, placed the message on a chair and walked out, whistling inanely.

“ My patience! ” exclaimed Mrs. Stump indignantly, “ that Meade boy is the laziest critter that ever pretended

The Delayed Telegram

he was alive. As Ira D. Sankey puts it,

‘ A whistlin’ boy and a crowin’ hen
Is worse than the whoopin’ cough, amen!’

Seems like he intended this for you, Mrs. Bishop.”

Amy took the message and read it. An expression of pained surprise came into her tear-tired eyes, but she said no word as she handed the missive to Jim.

“ Want me to read this? ” Jim asked.

“ Please,” Amy answered. “ Read it, so Danny will know, too.” Then she went to the window and looked out into the dismal day.

“ It’s dated Boonboro—that’s three stations east,” Jim explained, and Danny nodded. “ ‘ Mrs. Bishop, Commercial House, Pikehaven. Heard by

Jim Hickey

accident of a chance in Chicago to take out another company booked over same route. Train was just leaving; not time to say good-by. Have sent money to hotel to pay your board for a week. Will join you there soon. Don't worry. Couldn't let the opportunity escape. Love to you and the baby.' "

Jim stopped.

" Does he say love to the baby? " Danny asked in a strange, choked voice.

" He does," Jim answered stolidly.

" My patience! " Mrs. Stump said, " husbands is queer fish. As Ira D. Sankey puts it,

' A husband is just like the grass,
The grass is like the hay;
He may be here to-morrow but
He isn't here to-day! '

The idea of a husband rushin' off like that without even tellin' his wife and

The Delayed Telegram

child good-by, fare thee well. My patience! ”

Amy turned from the window. “ It wasn’t Sam’s fault,” she said quietly. “ You may be sure he wouldn’t leave baby and me without saying good-by if he could help it. Now would he, Jim? ”

“ No, indeed, he wouldn’t,” Jim answered firmly.

Danny muttered his favorite words and turned to examine intently a faded chromo of the late lamented Peter Stump.

CHAPTER FOURTH

THE INJURED STRANGER



E'LL have to stand by Amy and the kid, that's a cinch, Danny!" Jim said, as they walked down Pikehaven's lonely main street that afternoon.

"If I could only sell my new and original sentimental ballad!" mused Danny.

"Have you been at the pipe again?" asked Jim. "What is it this time, Danny, one of those home and mother symphonies?"

"No," answered Danny; "it's a new idea. I've rung father in for a change. Say, if I could get DeKoven, or Englander, or Victor Herbert to

The Injured Stranger

glue a little music to this I think it would be immense. I call it, ' Do You Remember, Darling? ' Pipe the keen, honest, home-made sentiment:

Do you remember, darling,
What your memory don't forget?
When you used to come and see me
In the parlor, already yet?
Have you saved a recollection
Of that by-gone happy day,
When we munched each other's peanuts
And threw the shells away?

*When we munched each other's peanuts
And threw the shells away.*

SECOND SPASM.

Do you remember, darling,
My dear old Papa's tide,
When he fell in of an evening
Through the parlor door so wide?
You will forget much, darling,
Of what has gone between,
But you'll remember Papa
And his bundle of benzine!

Jim Hickey

*But you'll remember Papa
And his bundle of benzine.*

THIRD SPASM.

Your wages then, my darling,
Were just six dollars per;
That you were making fifty
You fondly would infer.
Then Papa dear would hear you,
And twenty cents would win
With which to buy more benzine
To help his tide come in.

*With which to buy more benzine
To help his tide come in.*

“No, Danny.” Jim shook his head.
“I can’t stand for that—it’s too much
to the Oscaloosa for mine. I’m afraid
your lyrics have gout in the feet.
You’re a shine author, Bud, a shine
author.”

“Say,” persisted Danny, “if I ever
get a chance to sing that in New York

The Injured Stranger

I'll be crowned the Duke of Broadway,
and I'll have my initials on seven auto-
mobubbles. It's jealousy, Jim; it's
jealousy that's making your heart beat
fast. Pipe this little society bit I tore
off this morning just after breakfast.
Why, if I could place this with the
right kind of a screech owl I'd have
Paul Dresser worried down to two hun-
dred pounds flat. Pipe the heart inter-
est and the hidden tears in this. I call
it 'We are Divorced My Darling Wife.'
Pipe the minor chords running through
the words:

The house was decked with flowers gay
And sweet forget-me-nits—
The guests were all assembled and
Their clothes were perfect fits!
The husband said, "Weep not, my dear!"
His voice was weak and hoarse;
"The lawyer's clerk will soon be here
And hand us our divorce!"

Jim Hickey

CHORUS.

We are divorced, my darling wife,
But we shall meet again.
I'm true to all the girls, and you
Be true to all the men!
When co-respondents gather round
Oh! please remember then
We are divorced, my darling wife,
But we shall meet again.

“ Nix, Danny,” laughed Jim. “ If we wait for one of your songs to buy us a breakfast we'll be shoveling clouds on an empty stomach. I guess we'll have to cut out the lyrics and grab a job. Let's hunt up the station agent.”

“ Say, Jim,” assented the undaunted Danny, “ that station agent affair is the best audience I ever played to. Maybe he knows a couple of brick-layers that need understudies—we'll go on for them, eh, Jim? ”

The Injured Stranger

“ I’m Freddie with the eager fists! ”
Jim agreed. “ Anything in the line of honest toil, except second-story work or porch climbing, for yours very sincerely. We’ve got to crowd enough dollar bills together to get that little woman and her kiddie on the train for Chicago. How about it, Danny? ”

“ Make mine the same, Jim,” the other answered. Then a thought struck him. “ What if she won’t go, Jim? Seems like I heard somebody in the company say the first week I joined that her people are well fixed, and that they passed her up when she ran off to marry Sam Bishop. She’s proud, Jim, and I’ll bet four dollars she won’t go home till they put ‘ Welcome ’ in electric lights on the mat in the vestibule.”

“ Well, if we can raise the price,

Jim Hickey

we'll take a chance on that, Danny," Jim replied. "We can't leave her here on the prairie and let Sam Bishop win the trick, can we?"

"Not in a thousand years!" yelled Danny. "What! Let that polish win out? Well, I think me nay! Come on, Mercutio, the brick-yards for ours!"

At the depot Jabe Meade greeted them with a laugh that startled the solemn freight cars on the siding.

"I was telling Major Palmer about you two cusses," he chuckled. "'Specially that thar fat one—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Who's Major Palmer?" Jim inquired.

"Richest man in Pikehaven," Jabe answered, looking at Danny and laughing in anticipation of another story. "Mortal Caesar! He's got more money than some people has whiskers. He

The Injured Stranger

lives in that big stone house up on the hill, t'other side of town. He was down here a spell ago to see if thar was any troupers in town, and when I told him about this yer fat cuss takin' off a Dutch policeman and fallin' so's to bust his galluses, dag gone if the Major didn't near explode—ha, ha, ha, ha! ”

“ What did the Major want with the troupers? ” Jim asked.

“ He's givin' a dag gone big blow out to-night,” Jabe replied. “ Birth-day party or suthin'. Mortal Caesar! why they's people comin' from all around. Biggest affair Pikehaven's had in years. Major wanted to get some troupers to go up thar and act out for the benefit of his guests. Money ain't no object to him. When I told him about you two, 'specially this yer fat cuss—ha, ha, ha, ha!—Major says, ‘ Send 'em up about nine o'clock, and

Jim Hickey

le'me know if I can depend on 'em.' Will you go, boys? "

" Tiddy um, tiddy um, tiddy addy addy iddy um! Aye tiddy addy um, a oodle addy aye! " warbled Danny in jig time, while Jim danced all over the platform, to the keen delight of Jabe.

Then they both embraced their " angel," and declared him to be " the biggest little bit of all right they'd ever met! " And to crown Jabe's joys Danny told him comic stories till the station agent crouched panting in a corner and wheezed out, " Mortal Caesar! stop it, ye fat cuss, stop it! I'll bust my b'iler, sure! "

Major Palmer's " social event " was a big success that night, and everybody present declared that Jim and Danny were instrumental in adding hugely to the evening's gaiety.

The Major was delighted with them

The Injured Stranger

both. They left the big house on the hill richer by fifty dollars, two quart bottles of Pommery and enough thanks and compliments to make their ears tingle for a month.

“ Did you catch me handing out the invalid gags? ” Danny grinned, as they hurried to the hotel. “ Say, Jim, when you gave that imitation of Henry Dixey imitating Henry Irving I almost imitated a fit.”

“ Why, Danny, wasn't it the goods? ”

“ Yes, it was the goods all right, but you delivered the wrong package. You looked like Ned Harrigan in ‘ Old Lavender,’ and you talked like Richard Mansfield in ‘ Old Heidelberg.’ ”

“ Well, Danny, didn't we agree to give them any old thing, and didn't we get the coin, all right? ”

“ Did we! ” chortled Danny. “ Oh,

Jim Hickey

the mazume, the spondools, the cush! Say, if Major Palmer is a self-made man he's certainly a good steady worker, for he turned out a finished job."

"Do we take Amy and the kiddie to Chicago, and do we have the car-fare left to hunt up her people?" Jim bubbled over with enthusiasm. "Well, I should control a Trust! And this wine, Danny, the Pommery goes straight to Jabe Meade, the Human Joke-hunter, eh, what?"

"You bet it does!" Danny agreed. "That lad is all right, if he does laugh like a boiler explosion. Say, Jim, every time I think of the dinner we surrounded at the Major's house I feel like going back and apologizing to the cook."

Jim registered their name with a wondrous flourish at The Commercial

The Injured Stranger

House, and asked Harry Slite, the night clerk, if he had a double room with two beds and what was the rate per day.

“ I believe I can demonstrate to your satisfaction,” Mr. Slite replied, lingering lovingly on every syllable, “ that the desired shelter, undeniably comfortable and advantageously located, will be immediately forthcoming.”

“ Back up! ” whispered Jim to Danny. “ Don’t break off any bad grammar or the professor will have us pinched.”

Mr. Slite at one time in his somewhat uneventful career had threatened to become a novelist, but while yet not far out on the sea of literature he was rudely buffeted by adverse waves, and the billows of Destiny finally drove him back, back into the office of a third-rate hotel in a fourth-rate town.

Jim Hickey

He revenged himself on Fate, however, by showering all his unprinted words on friend or foe alike—words as heavy and ponderous as the rumble of distant artillery.

“What did you say the rate is?” Jim inquired.

“The rate per diem for a double room with two beds is the merely nominal sum of three dollars,” Mr. Slite replied, with a flourish of the left hand, during the progress of which the little finger stood out at right angles to its companions. “This, I assure you, gentlemen, is not extortionate when one considers the extreme desirability of the apartment, and also the fact that the viands set before the traveller in our sumptuous dining-hall are calculated to charm the palate of a Lucullus.”

“I believe you, with all my soul,”

The Injured Stranger

said Jim; “ but, for the love of kippered herring, cut out the long speeches and come down to cues. Put us down for a sleeper and chain the dog—we may be late in rolling in. And, say, Professor, if you can send us up a pitcher of ice-water without doing a monologue in blank verse, do so, and oblige yours ever devotedly, the Polar Brothers, Bear and Forbear.”

Mr. Slite watched them in dumb amazement as they rushed out of the office. It was hours later before he uttered a word longer than two syllables.

When they presented Jabe with the two quarts of Pommery as a token of their gratitude his thanks took the form of a laugh, which for noise and duration broke all records.

“ I knew that thar fat cuss could act out on top of a parlor floor just as

Jim Hickey

well as on top of a stage—ha, ha, ha, ha!” Jabe bubbled over. “Mortal Caesar! did you cut up like a Dutch policeman and fall on yer eyebrows? Say, I’m dag gone sorry I’m too busy here to get into sassiety, or I’d a’ been thar, laffin’ fit to bust! I’d a’ been thar, anyway, sure’s shootin’, but Maw was ailin’ to-night, and I had to nurse Flowery between trains.”

“Flowery!” Jim echoed, puzzled.

“Yes, that’s the name of our youngest little gal,” Jabe explained. “School teacher told Maw that some poet cuss took and written a piece about Flowery Meades, so Maw says they ain’t no poet can write anything too nice for our youngest, so we christened her Flowery Meade. Mortal Caesar! I’d like to have that fat cuss cut up some for Maw and the little ones when she ain’t ailin’.”

The Injured Stranger

The pleading note in Jabe's voice went straight to Danny's sensitive heart, and when he promised to drop in soon and "cut up" for the children there were tears of delight in good old Jabe's eyes.

They took a short cut back to the hotel, going through a vacant lot in the rear of the depot.

"Pipe, Jim!" Danny exclaimed suddenly. Jim, deep in thought, looked up and beheld, not fifty feet away, three men struggling and fighting fiercely.

Both comedians yelled and started quickly for the combatants, and as they did so one man dropped like a log to the ground, while the other two took to their heels, and were speedily lost sight of in the maze of freight cars in the yard.

Jim and Danny knelt down by the stricken man. "He's out!" Jim said.

Jim Hickey

“ It’s a hold up. Gee! Look at that crack on the coco. They’ve been trying to move the furniture out of his upper story. Quick, Danny, run and get Jabe, and we’ll carry him up to the hotel.”

Danny was off as fast as his fat legs would carry him. Jim unbuttoned the unconscious man’s collar and pillowed the wounded head on his knee till Danny and Jabe came hurrying back.

“ Mortal Caesar! ” cried Jabe, when he knelt down to look at the stranger. “ I saw him get off the night express that pulled out just afore you boys came down. He walked up and down for exercise like. The train was held up here a few minutes, and I guess he was nervous. I’ll bet it was them two dag gone tramps I saw skulkin’ around the yard to-day—blast ’em! ”

They carried the unfortunate stran-

The Injured Stranger

ger to The Commercial House, and up the stairs to the first spare room, much to the astonishment of the learned Mr. Slite, who, at Jim's suggestion, rushed next door and aroused Dr. Humphreys.

Jim and Danny bathed the wounded man's head, undressed him and had him in bed before the doctor arrived.

"It'll be serious unless we can get a faithful nurse," Dr. Humphreys whispered, after a careful examination. "His skull is not fractured, but the shock was extremely severe, and he needs careful watching. Who is he?"

Jim took some letters from the stranger's coat pocket and handed them to the doctor, who examined them and exclaimed presently, "Why, it's Colonel Harbell, one of the best known men on the Chicago Board of Trade! Great heavens! how did this happen?"

Jim Hickey

Jim related all he knew, and Danny supplemented the story with the remarks made by Jabe Meade. The doctor bade them go and rest. He would stay at the wounded man's bedside for an hour or two.

In the hall they met Mrs. Stump, duly impressed by Jabe's story. "Oh, ain't it dreadful!" she cried. "As Ira D. Sankey puts it,

'In the midst of life there comes the strife,
Perchance the crool assassing's knife!'

I'm thankful that Peter Stump ain't alive this night; he'd be that worried he'd surely take to whiskey, and likker always did make a perfect beast of him till there was no livin' with him. The hand of Providence is surely in his takin' off before this horrible night. The poor man! Oh, them awful

The Injured Stranger

tramps! They ought to be a law prohibitin' them entirely. Is the poor man much murdered? "

Just then Amy came out of her room fully dressed. Mrs. Stump had long since awakened her and told her the whole story, with such affecting details as occurred to that garrulous, but kind-hearted old lady.

" Jim, I'm sure I can be of some help to the doctor," Amy said. " Really, I'm a good nurse; and you'll watch the baby, won't you, Danny? "

Danny nodded eagerly and the dimples danced.

" We'll see what the doctor says," Jim replied, and he led the way quietly into the sick-room.

" Please, may I help you, Doctor? " Amy whispered, as she drew near the bed.

Dr. Humphreys smiled an affirma-

Jim Hickey

tive, and Amy leaned over to look at the injured stranger.

The next instant she gasped and fell back into the doctor's arms, but in another moment she pulled herself together and stood erect, brave and strong.

“ He is my father! ” she said softly.



"He is my father," Amy Said —Page 74

CHAPTER FIFTH

THE RUNAWAY HORSE



AIN'T never seen the beat of that young woman sence I was born," Mrs. Stump exclaimed. "For three hull mortal days now she's been a'nussin' her father and tendin' to that dear baby; and how she keeps so smilin' and cheerful is more'n I can answer for. As Ira D. Sankey puts it,

'A daughter's love is rich and rare
No matter be she dark or fair!'

My patience! the hand of Providence was surely in that poor man's gettin' his head busted right where a lovin' daughter could nuss him back to convolutions."

Jim Hickey

“Convaletenth,” lisped Marmaduke, somewhat scathingly.

“That’s right, Marmaduke, display your poor Maw’s ignorance just because she ain’t glitterin’ all over with brains like you be,” she said, proud of the opportunity to audibly admire her firstborn.

The recipient of this reproof with praise puffed forth a cloud of cigarette smoke and said, “She thirtenly ith a corker!”

Jim Hickey looked up from the letter he was writing at the little desk.

“Marmaduke!” his mother exclaimed. “My patience! I do hope the spark of love ain’t kindled in your boozum. If it is, then you must pour forth the viles of your wrath upon it and put it out. As Ira D. Sankey has it,

‘Love is a snake that comes and goes,
Disturbin’ man from head to toes!’

The Runaway Horse

That means, Marmaduke, that love is nothin' more than rheumatism of the nervous system, and you know as well as I do that you ain't fit physically to have no attackt of rheumatiz right now."

Jim snickered and busied himself over his letter. Dr. Humphreys came bustling down from the sick room.

"Mornin', Doctor!" Mrs. Stump greeted him. "How's your patient this mornin'; any new compensations?"

The doctor smiled. "Why, he's getting on famously. He'll be up and about in less than a week. Such kind attention as that man has received here couldn't help but bring about a speedy recovery. I'm sure, Mrs. Stump, that Colonel Harbell will never forget your devotion."

"My patience!" the good old lady

Jim Hickey

exclaimed. "I ain't done nothin' but just trapse around and carry and fetch, and the like of that!"

The doctor dissented vigorously. "You've been a ministering angel, Mrs. Stump—oh! I know all about it! Night and day you've waited and watched with kindness unceasing. The Colonel knows and appreciates." The doctor turned to Jim. "Mr. Hickey, in all my experience I never met two young men more thoughtful, more tactful than you and Mr. Dean."

"Tush, Doc!" said Jim, coloring under the words. "Don't peel off any vote of thanks for us. We just stood by the speaking tube and listened for orders, that's all. Cut out the sugar talk, Doc, and let it go at that. It's my belief that the Colonel is so glad he's found his daughter that he hasn't time to be sick."

The Runaway Horse

“ My patience! and I was right there when it happened,” Mrs. Stump informed them. “ We was both standin’ by the bed when the Colonel opened his eyes. First he looked at me but he didn’t give no sign that he knew me, as well he mightn’t ’cause I never seen the man afore in all my born days. Then his eyes rested on his daughter for a moment and he closed ’em quick, just for all the world like he was sayin’ to himself, ‘ I’m dreamin’ this! ’ Then he opened them again and seen she was still there. ‘ Amy,’ he whispered, very gentle. ‘ Yes, father,’ says she, ‘ it’s your disobedient little girl come back again. You are sick, but I’m going to stay right here and nuss you! ’ They was tears in his eyes now, but they was happy tears. Then she took his hand in hers and petted him like, and he went to sleep like a baby. My patience!

Jim Hickey

that reminds me, I must get some fresh milk and oatmeal for that little boy child! ”

The doctor went his smiling way and Jim joined Danny who sat outside on the sidewalk, amusing Amy's little boy by singing in his sweet though husky voice a song of his own composition.

“ It's one I cooked up this morning,” Danny explained. “ It's meant for a swift slap at the woozy coon songs and I'm trying it on the kid. If Li'l Bill doesn't quit me before I get through it's a sign that it will be a seller. I call it ‘ Ol' Friends Am Best.’ Pipe the close harmony in the vamp:

Doan't want fo' to sing dem songs dat's new,
I kain't, mah honey, I kain't!
Fo' de words am strange an' de chunes ain't
true,
Ain't true, no, honey, dey ain't.

The Runaway Horse

So I sings yo' to sleep wif de same ol' song
Dat I sung long time ergo,
An' er Sandman comin' right erlong, right
erlong,
When I sing erbout Ol' Black Joe:

*"Gone am de days when mah heart was light
an' gay;
Gone am de fren's from de cotton fiel's
erway;
Gone one an' all to a better lan' I know—
I hear dem angel voices call'n' ol' black
Joe!"*

Doan' like fo' to sing dem songs dat's new,
Dey's trash, yes, honey, dess trash!
Dey's full of bad mokes an' gals named Lou,
An' you hear dem razzer blades clash.
So I sings yo' to sleep wif a good ol' chune,
An' yo' noddin' yo' cu'ly li'l head,
Kase we has no use fo' a sassy young coon,
When we recollec' Ol' Uncle Ned:

*"Den it's hang up de fiddle an' de bow—oh
—oh!"*

*Lay down de shovel an' de hoe;
Fo' dah's no mo' work fo' po' Uncle Ned
Kase he's gone wah de good dahkies go!"*

Jim Hickey

Doan' want fo' to sing dem songs dat's new,
Dey's low-down, honey, an' cheap;
Dey make yo' blush an' dey scare yo', too;
Den yo' never gwiner git to sleep.
De Sandman hates dem—tol' me so
Las' time dat he came eroun;
Ol' fren's am bes'—den hesh a bye low
Kase Massa's in de col', col' groun':

*“Down in de co'nfiel'
Hear dat mo'nful soun'!
All de dahkies am a-weepin'—
Massa's in de col', col' groun'!”*

The little lad listened eagerly to the very last note and Danny's delight knew no bounds.

“It's a cinch,” Jim, he chuckled; “that's what the public wants—didn't you pipe Li'l Bill staying right along till the curtain fell! Me for a music foundry with that bit of work the moment we hit a burg with grown-up buildings.”

“It's all right, Danny,” Jim agreed.

The Runaway Horse

“It’s the best piece of goods you have on the counter and maybe you could sing it in public without a net! ”

“ Nice song, nice Danny,” gravely commented Li’l Bill, and Jim’s opinion counted for nothing.

Pikehaven’s principal thoroughfare slept under an October sun which was exerting all its efforts to be bright and warm.

“Well, Danny,’ said Jim, after a long pause, “ those tramps made it easy sledding for us, even if they did write their autographs on the Colonel’s head with their night sticks! I’ll bet he’d stand up and take another knock-out just to show how glad he is to find Amy.”

Danny grinned and danced “ Li’l Bill ” on his fat knee, while the youngster chuckled and said, “ Danny p’ay hossy! gallup’m! gallup’m! ”

Jim Hickey

“ I guess we can give the signal and pull out of here in a day or two, Danny! ” Jim said after a pause.

Danny sighed deeply and “ played horse ” vigorously to “ Li'l Bill's ” evident delight.

“ We'd better hike West, don't you think so, Danny? ”

Danny nodded.

“ Maybe we can catch on in St. Louis. They'll need a couple of good actors like us out there to give the Drama a boost during the Exposition. If the managers give us the ice-cream salve, and put the saucy boots to us, maybe we can catch on down the Pike and play dates manicuring the camels. Anyway, we have our health, Danny, and we could make sandwich money in front of a hootchy-kooch palace, barking at the Rubes! ”

Danny busied himself with the

The Runaway Horse

baby's prattle and paid no heed to the glories of the future which Jim was painting so artistically.

“ Besides,” Jim went on, “ there’s a certain hard-boiled clam out that way who deserves our united attention. I want to meet that Bishop crab just once more and hand him my kindest regards with a spike in the centre. How about you, Danny? ”

“ Hellsdelight! ” yelled Danny, whereupon the baby looked up at him in two-year old amazement. “ It certainly would refresh my spirits to move a piano across the floor of that man’s face! ”

Jim laughed. “ Say, Danny, why don’t you go to the room and lie down a bit. You’ve been up half the night and a few paragraphs of sleep won’t spoil your complexion—go on! You for the pillows! ”

Jim Hickey

“ Who’ll take care of Li’l Bill? ”
Danny asked.

“ I will! ” said Jim.

“ You! ” contemptuously from Danny. “ What do you know about taking care of kids? ”

“ I’d like to know how you got so well up in the part? ” Jim retorted with a pretence of scorn. “ You’re a fine understudy for a nurse-maid, you are! It’s a pity you couldn’t have used some of that ability on a home product! ”

Danny’s eyes were on the child whom he now held cuddled up in his arms.

“ I did once, Jim! ” he said quietly. “ Long before I ever met you. He was only this little fellow’s age when the angels called him in off the road. In less than two weeks his mother followed him Up Above, to help the angels look after him. I guess I wasn’t good

The Runaway Horse

enough to go 'long, too, Jim, but I wanted to then, and I've wanted to many's the time since."

"Forgive me, Danny," Jim pleaded, with unsteady voice. "You never told me, and, and—I was only joshing, Danny!"

Danny looked up and smiled. "It's the only memory I have, Jim, and I was too fond of it to put it up on the bulletin board. It's all right, old pal; you didn't hurt my feelings any. You go on in and sleep; I'm going to stay here with Li'l Bill. Don't you know that a child must have an hour in the sun every day? Exit, Jim, exit upstairs, left—and exit laughingly!"

Without a word Jim went into the hotel, and Danny romped with the baby until that diminutive individual chuckled himself into an attack of hiccoughs.

Jim Hickey

An hour passed by and Pikehaven still slumbered beneath the October sun. The universal spirit of somnolency presently crept insinuatingly over Danny's tired eyes and he nodded, nodded, while the baby wandered away open-eyed and bent on discovery.

Finally Nature and the sleep gods won the fight and Danny, leaning back in his chair with his head on the window-sill, slept on.

Li'l Bill toddled out into the dusty street and, gurgling with delight, sat down to study the formation of certain sticks and stones at closer range.

Suddenly the peace was broken by a series of shouts far up the street. The sleepers in the marts of commerce which lined Pikehaven's main street awoke and gazing out of doors added their drowsy shouts to the increasing din.



A man rushed out and grabbed
for the horse!—Page 89

The Runaway Horse

“ A runaway! a runaway! ”

A big black horse, dragging a wildly careening runabout, came tearing madly down the street, his nostrils distended, his flanks all foam-bedecked and his eyes rolling with frenzy.

Directly in the terror-driven horse's pathway sat the crooning child, piling stick upon stick and stone upon stone in his baby effort to build a house.

Nearer and nearer came the infuriated horse, now made more desperate by the ever increasing noise of the on-lookers. Pikehaven was awake. A man rushed out and grabbed for the horse's head but the big animal swerved, whereupon the would-be hero retired gladly and took his place again in the humble ranks of the shouters.

The rushing avalanche of horse-flesh was but a short block from the prattling baby when Danny awoke to the

Jim Hickey

shouting. With a rush his senses returned to him and the impending horror was blood-red in his eyes.

At the same moment Jim had hurried to the open window of their room on the second floor. One glance developed the panorama of evil and with the agility of a cat he was out the window and half climbed, half fell into the street.

The wondering child was lifted from beneath the very feet of the furious horse, but just as Danny turned one of the shafts of the runabout struck him in the side. He fell headlong but not before Jim had grabbed from his arms the now thoroughly frightened little lad.

The horse dashed on, a wheel of the runabout passing over Danny's still body, and then, as though satisfied with his sport, permitted himself to be caught two blocks away.

The Runaway Horse

The low comedian opened his eyes and looked about him wildly. "Li'l Bill!" he asked weakly, "is he safe?" Before they could tell him he sighed and fainted again.

Tender hands lifted Danny and carried him, all blood-bedabbled, to his room.

CHAPTER SIXTH

THE TWO PALS



ABE MEADE ran up from the depot to the hotel that evening to get the story direct from headquarters.

Marmaduke Stump consumed three cigarettes and lispingly related his version of the event with a view to annexing some of the glory. As a result of the rather selfish motive underlying the endeavor, Marmaduke's story consisted mainly of a detailed description of the carrying of Danny upstairs, wherein the narrator made himself the central figure and invited the kind applause of his audience.

Jabe was chary with his words of

The Two Pals

approval, however, so the pale youth dismissed his listener with a disdainful wave in the direction of Mr. Slite, the night clerk.

Mr. Slite's story was more complete with regard to statistics, but it did not appeal very strongly to Jabe Meade for the reason, perhaps, that he understood only about one word in ten.

“ The preponderance of evidence,” Mr. Slite began, “ proves almost conclusively that the quadruped was driven into a state of mental disorder by the sudden appearance in its immediate neighborhood of a comparatively small piece of torn newspaper which fluttered hither and thither on the autumnal breezes, causing the animal to become so perturbed mentally that he dashed madly onward.”

“ Mortal Caesar! ” murmured Jabe, awed by the rumble of the syllables.

Jim Hickey

“It happened, unfortunately,” Mr. Slite continued, “that the child of one of our esteemed guests had unwittingly precipitated itself upon *terra firma*, right in the course of the onrushing equine. Providentially, however, for the child, another of our esteemed guests, a gentleman of much physical courage, hurried to the rescue and dragged the youthful one, uninjured, from the very gates of Inferno, and in so doing was himself hurled to the earth and rendered *hors du combat*!”

“Sufferin’ Mortal Caesar!” exclaimed the impressed Jabe. “Did that thar fat cuss get all that done to him! Gosh! that’s tough! And he cert’n’ly was a hull circus to hisself, dag gone if he wasn’t. I’m that sorry I ain’t got the words to tell it.” Jabe turned and found Mrs. Stump at his elbow.

The Two Pals

“ Is that you, Jabe,” she said. “ My patience! I was just sayin’ to Mrs. Bishop, and her a’cryin’ over her baby that wasn’t even scratched, that Providence has certainly saw fit to shower its blessing’s on us in the way of excitement. As Ira D. Sankey puts it so beautiful,

‘ Lives of great men all remind us
Trouble’s brewin’ right behind us!’

That was always a favorite proverb of your father’s, Marmaduke. Many a time I’ve heerd him sayin’ it just afore some dead beat walked off without payin’ for his night’s lodgin’. Did you ever see such a eppydemic of doings as we’ve had here lately, Jabe? My patience! I won’t be surprised at nothin’ no more. Pikehaven’s gettin’ to be a regular Mettrollypus with its hold-ups and runaways and the like of that.

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You can't tell me we hadn't ought to have policemen with brass buttons paradin' around—my patience! ”

“ How's the fat cuss? ” Jabe managed to ask.

“ Bad,” she answered. “ Doctor says it's serious. He has delirium tremens! ”

“ Just delirium, Maw! ” corrected Marmaduke. “ People thath struck by a runaway horth don't have trementh, only delirium! ”

“ My patience! that's so, Marmaduke? ” she agreed. “ Your poor Paw used always to favor havin' the tremens with his delirium, so that's how I got it mixed.”

In the meantime Jim sat watching by the bedside of the stricken Danny.

Dr. Humphreys had gone with the promise of a speedy return. Jim thought over all the doctor had said

The Two Pats

but could find few crumbs of comfort. Danny was in a bad way.

Jim looked out complainingly into the gathering night. So this, then, was to be the finish, he thought. Good old Danny! they had chummed it together for many a season, and now!

Deep shadows came into the room and took their stations in the far corners. The spirit of dread stared wild-eyed at Jim through the gloom but as he raised his eyes he could see the tiny windows of Heaven opening, and one by one the trembling stars came forth.

Fever-driven Danny had tossed and moaned unceasingly but now the darkness seemed to soothe him for he lay very still.

Presently the sick comedian's eyes opened and he whispered weakly.

In an instant Jim was leaning over him, "Yes, Danny, lad!"

Jim Hickey

“ Li'l Bill, is he safe? ”

“ Sure, Danny; he's all to the good. He didn't even whimper. But the doctor says you must lie still, Beau, and we'll get you mended nicely in a day or two! ”

“ Jim, I'm up against it! ”

“ Tush, Danny, it's only a phony knock-out. You're not going to take the count, don't worry! ”

“ Jim,” Danny insisted in the weakest of whispers; “ I feel all tangled up. Did the Doc. say I'd have to ring down? ”

“ No, Danny; but he said you must do a thinking part. The talky-talk puts you over on Woozy Avenue! Rest easy, you're not going to speak the tag, yet, my old chum! ”

“ Jim! ”

“ Yes, Danny! ”

“ Doc. means all right, but he don't

The Two Pals

know. I feel as though I'm slipping away from you; would you mind holding on to my hand, Jim? I saw *Her* a while ago and she smiled just like she used to, Jim, and she says, 'Danny, we've been sitting by the gate waiting for you this ever and ever so long!' And I saw the little boy, too, Jim, but when he beckoned to me the lights grew dim and somebody let down a big, black curtain."

Jim's eyes were wet with tears.

"I'll pull out the next time they call me, Jim, and I'll tell you when I see them, so you can let go my hand. You won't mind, will you, old friend? She was always so timid and she's afraid to go 'round without me."

"Hush, Danny, please!" Jim pleaded.

"It's all right, Jim, I won't talk," Danny sighed.

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The cheap clock on the bureau ticked on noisily through the darkness.

Danny stirred again and whispered, "Jim, that big curtain worries me. Do you think God has me on the black list and won't let me join her and the little boy? "

"No, Danny; please don't," Jim whispered back.

"You don't think God would give me my notice just because I interpolated a lot of shine talk in the part He gave me to play, do you, Jim? "

"No, Danny; try to sleep, like a good old pal," Jim urged.

"Jim! "

"Yes, Danny! "

"Could you do a bit of a prayer, Jim; it might take that curtain up again."

Jim tried to make light of the request. "I'm afraid I'd fluff, Danny,

The Two Pals

I haven't been cast for a part like that since I was a kid and I don't believe I could make good."

"Can't you say Now I Lay Me!" pleaded Danny.

Jim knelt by the bedside. "Please, God," he said brokenly; "please don't get critical, because I'm fishing for lines and there isn't any prompt book here to put me next. God, please, if Danny is booked in Heaven won't You cancel his dates for a while and let him play here with me, because it'll be so lonely without him. I know I'm selfish, God; but mother used to tell me that You are all love and gentleness, and You'll forgive me and let Danny stay, won't you, God! Danny never did anyone a wrong in all his life, and You have so many like him up there with You that he can be excused for a while, can't he, God! I know I'm only

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a piker at praying, but if You'll let Danny be with me for a while we'll both get up in our lines and do the square thing, and—and—and—I'm all in—amen! ”

“ Now I Lay Me,” whispered Danny.

Jim brushed the tears away and went on, “ Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake I pray the Lord my soul to take—amen! ”

Jim buried his face in the coverlet and sobbed like a child. Through the darkness Danny put out his hand and patted Jim on the head.

Then silence fell, while the faint light of the stars came through the window and sought to comfort them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CURTAIN FALLS



WHEN Jim with heavy eyes looked up Dr. Humphreys was smiling.

“He’s sleeping,” the doctor said; “the fever has gone down and we’ll pull him through all right.”

With a heart grown suddenly light Jim hurried off to tell the good news to Amy and Colonel Harbell. That they were both pleased goes without saying, for Danny occupied a very high place in their good graces.

Colonel Harbell’s wound proved not at all serious and soon yielded to treat-

Jim Hickey

ment. The fact that he had found his daughter added so much to his peace of mind that his recovery was quick indeed.

Jim Hickey took the first opportunity to tell Colonel Harbell all about Sam Bishop and his cowardly act of desertion. The Colonel was furious and wanted to put detectives on the trail of the missing manager, but Jim pointed out that such a plan would only bring shame and sorrow upon Amy.

“He’s a kite,” Jim said to the Colonel. “He’s up in the air now but he’s got to bump sooner or later. Pass him up, Colonel, and try to side-step when Amy gets curious about him. She thinks he’s still in Chicago because I’ve been cooking an occasional telegram so’s to keep her from getting restless.”

The Curtain Falls

“What do you mean, Jim?” the Colonel asked in amazement.

Jim told him how, with the kindly connivance of Jabe Meade, he had manufactured telegrams which bore all the earmarks of having been sent from Chicago by Sam Bishop to his wife in Pikehaven.

“It kept her from beating tattoos,” Jim explained. “If Jabe and I hadn’t kept the wires hot she would have walked up Foolish Street long ago. She doesn’t know what we know, Colonel, and it’s up to you to stand between her and the megaphone as long as you can. She still believes Sam Bishop to be the real slice of cake, so you want to let her keep on thinking that way until the opportunity is ripe to put her wise, but not just yet, Colonel.”

“You’re right, Jim,” the Colonel agreed.

Jim Hickey

“ The sooner you get her back with the old folks once again in Chicago the easier it’ll be to throw the sledge at that Bishop onion,” Jim went on. “ There’s no place like home, Colonel; and I ought to know because I never had one.”

“ We’ll not stir one step from this town, Jim, until our good friend, Danny, is on his feet, and that’s flat! ” the Colonel said emphatically. “ You boys stood by us and we’ll stand by you—well, rather! ”

A week went by. Danny’s progress along the road to health was rapid. One thing worried and fretted him, however, and that was the fact that he had proven false to his trust and had dropped asleep instead of carefully watching his little charge.

He said as much to Mrs. Stump who sat by his bedside one afternoon.

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“ My patience! ” the old lady exclaimed; “ don’t let that worry you. As Ira D. Sankey puts it.

‘ Sleep hath the gift of sweet restorin’,
And no man knoweth when he’s snoring! ’

Many’s the time I’ve woke up in the night and kept a’sayin’ that proverb to Peter Stump till he flopped over and ceased to repine through his nostrils. No, Mr. Danny, they ain’t no call for you to be flustered acause you took a cat-nap after nussin’ and tendin’ the wounded and the afflicted all the blessed night. As Ira D. Sankey puts it,

‘ Be thou as chaste as ice or snow,
The world don’t want to have thee so! ’

The meaning of that is, Mr. Danny, that they’s always a passel of fools in the world ready to find fault with them as

Jim Hickey

does accordin' to Nature. I'd just like to hear somebody say in my presence that you exceeded your duty when you took them forty winks—my patience! The ways of Providence is past all findin' out and they ain't no doubt in my mind but that fool hoss was sent a'gallopin' and cavortin' over your carcass as some kind of a blessin' in disguise. Peter Stump were a blessin' in disguise till he took to drinkin' likker and then the disguise dropped from him as the lily of the field drops before the reaper whose name is Death. As Ira Sankey puts it,

‘Man that is born of woman kind
Must toe the scratch and never mind!’

My patience! you ain't got no call to worry about such trifles. If I was you I'd just glory in that cat-nap, seein' as how the child is safe, and you ain't so

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bunged up you can't swaller a bowl full of my beef tea. Peter Stump just loved my make of soups and the like of that. I've seen that poor man drink himself into a stupor just so's he could be sick enough the next day to have me feed him beef tea with a spoon."

Mrs. Stump paused and glanced at her audience and when she saw that Danny was peacefully sleeping under the influence of her oratory, she sighed and tiptoed out of the room.

Thanks to the untiring thoughtfulness of Amy, Dr. Humphreys, Jim and Mrs. Stump and the Colonel, to say nothing of Li'l Bill, Danny's strength soon returned.

The Colonel and Jim were with him when for the first time the doctor permitted Danny to walk around the room.

"I want you boys to come with me to Chicago," the Colonel said, "and

Jim Hickey

I'm not prepared to take no for an answer, either."

Jim laughed, "Sorry, Colonel, but we're due in St. Louis, eh, Danny?"

"Sure, rehearsals begin right away," grinned Danny. "We open in three weeks with the Co. that's playing 'The Splinter In the Elbow.' I play the splinter and the manager gives us both the elbow on pay night."

"And I'm due to sing that new and touching ballad entitled, 'Peeping Through the Knot-hole in Papa's Wooden Leg!'" Jim chirped.

"Be serious, boys!" the Colonel admonished. "I mean just what I say. I want you as my guests in Chicago and you'll have to come."

"Nix, Colonel," Jim answered, soberly. "Not now. Take Amy and the kiddie home and give her a chance to forget the troupers."

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“What!” the Colonel exclaimed; “forget you and Danny! Absurd! My daughter and I don’t believe in forgetting our friends.”

The Colonel pleaded but Jim and Danny turned deaf ears. “We’ll bill the town some day, Colonel, and play a week stand with you, but you’ll have to release us for the present. There’s a fat part in a comic show waiting for Danny in St. Louis and he won’t be happy till he gets it.”

So the Colonel was forced to be content with their vague promises to visit him at some future time.

That evening Jim and the Colonel sat in the room with Danny and looked over the newspapers.

Jim was reading fictitious telegrams for Danny’s amusement.

“Here’s one, Danny!” Jim chuckled. “It’s dated New York and it says, ‘A

Jim Hickey

dispatch from Pikehaven, Illinois, to this paper, says that Danny Dean, the celebrated actor, tried to do the chariot race scene from Ben Hur in the main street, but the horse slipped and kicked Danny in his presence of mind. Mr. Dean refused to take an encore and the spectators demanded their money back, so the policemen had to make good."

Danny grinned and the Colonel looked on with an amused smile.

"Here's another—great Scott!" Jim's tone changed suddenly. "What the devil is this?" He arose quickly and closed the door. "Say, I'm weak all over. Listen to this, will you, and it's on the level!"

Jim's hands trembled as he held the newspaper nearer the light. "Paducah, Kentucky. An express train on the B. Q. & L. ran into an open switch twenty-two miles west of here last

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night and was wrecked. A man and a woman were killed and several others were injured. From letters found in his pocket the dead man was identified as Samuel Bishop, a theatrical manager. The satchel belonging to the dead woman bore the initials I. M., but her identity is not known."

"God's grace!" said Danny. "Then Amy need never know the truth!"

"She loved him, boys, or she would never have left home as she did," the Colonel said, feelingly. "She need never know the truth, but I'll always feel that I'm a better father to her if I telegraph money down there to have that poor devil decently buried."

"It's too late, Colonel!" Jim sighed. "This paper is four days old."

The next day at noon the Colonel, his daughter and her little son left the

Jim Hickey

Commercial House for the depot to board the Chicago Express. Mrs. Stump, decked out in sombre black, with here and there an ornament of ancient days, led the procession with the Colonel. Amy, escorted on either side by Jim and Marmaduke, followed closely, while Danny, talking earnestly to the listening "Li'l Bill," brought up the rear.

Jabe Meade, followed by the ever-whistling Panegyric, came smilingly forth to meet them at the depot and busied himself over their baggage.

"I'm almost heart-broken to have to leave all my more than kind friends in Pikehaven," Amy said, shaking hands as Marmaduke insisted for the seventh time. "In spite of all our troubles and terrifying experiences I've been happy, for I found my dear, good father again. And I've been happy,

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too, in the friendship of Jim, and Danny, and you, dear Mrs. Stump."

She paused and Marmaduke sighed pathetically.

"Oh, yes, and you, too, Marmaduke!" Amy continued, hurriedly. "But I'll be so glad to see my home again. Daddy says my room is just as I left it nearly three years ago—isn't that perfectly fine! And, besides, Mrs. Stump, you know Sam will be there—my husband, I mean!"

The Colonel took Jim's arm and the two strolled away, talking earnestly.

Danny was seated on a truck giving Li'l Bill his last horse-back ride, and the baby was yelling, "Make'm go fas', Danny! gallup'm! gallup'm!"

"My patience!" Mrs. Stump said to Amy; "they's always a husband bobbin' up to vex us with their uncertainty. As Ira D. Sankey puts it,

Jim Hickey

‘Beyond the sky, beyond the grave
Will husbands learn how to behave!’

I never could reason that out, Amy. Mebbe so and mebbe not. I expec’ when I reach that Heavingly Land, where Greenland’s icy mountings flow down their coral strand, I expec’ the fuss person I meet will be Peter Stump and he’ll say, ‘Maw, I got such a misery in the small of my back, I wisht you’d rub it fer me!’ ”

Amy laughed. “You’ll be sure to come and make me a real long visit in Chicago this winter, won’t you, Mrs. Stump, and bring Marmaduke,” she added when that gentleman’s face grew eager.

“Thirtenly, thirtenly, Mithith Bith-op,” he accepted with spirit, “And we’ll go to all the theaterth and thee all the burlethks and have thuch a thpree!”

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“ Like father like son,” Mrs. Stump said, proudly. “ As Ira D. Sankey puts it,

‘ Oh, man is born to squanderate
And be a howlin’ profligate!’ ”

“ Nonsense, my boy!” the Colonel was saying to Jim as they joined the others. “ I’m better able to judge these matters than you are. Mrs. Stump has my instructions with regard to all bills. From the moment you came to my rescue in that vacant lot yonder you became my guests, and that settles the matter finally. The debt of gratitude my daughter and I owe you two young men can never be repaid, but I’ll not lose sight of you, never fear.”

“ No, indeed, Jim,” Amy added; “ you and Danny will be ever in our thoughts, and I’ll teach Li’l Bill to remember you, too, Danny! ”

Jim Hickey

The express puffed haughtily into the depot; the last farewells were said; the passengers climbed on board and the train moved on again, leaving in sadness the little group at the depot.

“ My patience! ” Mrs. Stump said, fluttering her handkerchief wildly. “ I don’t believe I’ve sniffled as much sence the day your poor father was carried from our lovin’ presence, Marmaduke. Them folks surely did take a tight grip on my heart seein’ they wasn’t neither kith or kin to us. As Ira D. Sankey puts it.

‘ The shades of night were fallin’ fast
So what is over must be past! ’

They has my best wishes and God blest them! ” Then Mrs. Stump, followed by Marmaduke, the last of his race, went slowly back to take up the reins



"They has my best wishes and God blest them!" said Mrs. Stump.—Page 118

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of office again in Pikehaven's oldest and only hotel.

Two big tears were in Danny's eyes as the train finally disappeared and he turned to his friend. "Jim, that little kiddie was an awful hit with me!" was all he said.

"Now, Danny, back to the hammock for yours!" Jim said cheerily. "You've had enough excitement for one day. To-morrow we do a hot-foot for the West, you know, and the curves on these railroads aren't silk-lined yet."

"Me! why I'm old Dr. Sandow," Danny answered. "I've got an engagement. Don't you remember, I promised Jabe I'd cut up a little for the home folks, so we'll ring up if Maw isn't ailing. Will you play straight for me, Jim?"

"To the finish, Danny," said Jim.

(THE END.)



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